

FACT SHEET

L-737

Focusing on Management in the Family:

ENVIRONMENT

Wanda Meyer and Doris Myers*

ENVIRONMENT is

**your
surroundings:**

INTERNAL

house
education
religion

EXTERNAL

customs
mass media
geographic location
friends
schools
technology

How would you be different if

- you were born in a city slum? Or the Gold Coast of Chicago?
- you had never stepped outside your front door? Or seen TV?
- you were a citizen in a communist country instead of a democracy?
- you were the oldest instead of the youngest in your family?
- you were living during an economic depression rather than general affluence?

Sidney Harris in a recent column saw life this way: Thirty percent is what we are, 30 percent is what's handed to us, 30 percent is what we make of situations we're in and 10 percent is "just plain luck."

All these together are a person's "environment." All influence the kind and amount of management needed.

Think for a moment about your environment. What aspects of your life are "handed to you"? Your farm background, your ethnic customs, your family income? From these, how can you make the most of your opportunities? Determine how you can adjust to unfavorable conditions.

Your environment is the mixture of all the *surroundings* you are aware of. They determine how you feel, think and act, whether neutrally, favorably or negatively.

An individual or family as two general kinds of environment:

The internal, or that *within* the home and family area

The external, or that *outside* the home and family area

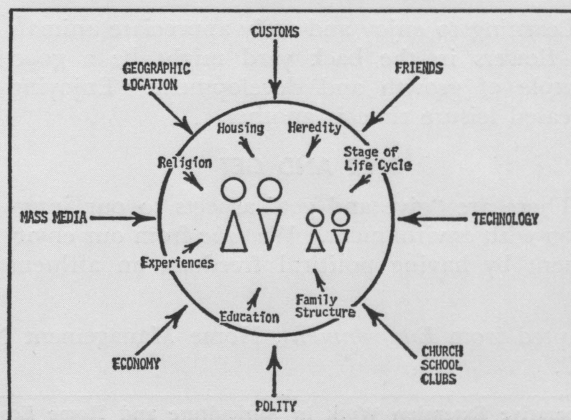
Each of these is composed of many kinds of *influences*. An example is the family represented in the figure. Notice the arrows inside the "family circle." They represent some internal influences. The arrows on the outside represent some external influences with which this family interacts.

The ways your environment provides opportunities and limitations requiring management are probably different from the ones discussed here,

*Extension home management specialists, Texas A&M University.

as they would be if you had a different size or age family or if you lived on a farm or in a small town.

The following quotations are examples of these internal and external forces of our environment. Perhaps this will provide insight as to why management is needed to interact with the possibilities and limitations of environment.



RESTRICTIONS

"Johnny will need his teeth straightened."
 "If our house were only arranged differently."
 "We're in an expensive stage with two children in college."
 "I wish my husband had more time to spend with the family."

INTERNAL ENVIRONMENT

Biological
Physical
Economy
Personal-social

OPPORTUNITIES

"Our family has a history of longevity."
 "Each of our children has his own room."
 "My wife is a school teacher. She could earn an adequate income if anything happens to me."
 "Vacation trips have done a lot to broaden our perspectives."

EXTERNAL ENVIRONMENT

"This isn't the best state if you have hay-fever."
 "Political unrest made it impossible to visit several countries on our world trip."
 "Technology sometimes moves too fast; take the bomb for instance."
 "Inflation has made investment decisions difficult."
 "The clubs here seem rather hard to become a member of."
 "I think Americans are too lenient with their children."

Geographic
Polity-legal
Science & technology
Economics
Social
Cultural

"We'll be living in Vermont, ski country."
 "My vote counts."
 "Automation is freeing us for leisure time."
 "There are millions of products on the market."
 "Our school system is excellent."
 "Our community retains many Danish holiday customs."

Where does management fit in? Management problems grow out of the restrictions and opportunities of environment. They might relate to *remedies* for the restrictions, such as getting Johnny's teeth straightened or improving the house floor plan.

Problems of *maintenance* and of *growth and development* come from environmental opportunities. In maintenance, keeping the status quo of an excellent school system might be one example. Another is keeping a mother up-to-date in her professional field, so if she needed to, she could return to it.

Learning to enjoy and truly appreciate animals and flowers in the back yard might be a good example of growth and development. Enjoying increased leisure time is another.

GIVE AND GET

There are "give and get" aspects to our interaction with environment. We *take* from our environment by having political freedom, an affluent

economy and new machines, opportunities for education and entertainment.

We also *give* to our environment. We give money, energy, knowledge and talents to improve family housing and strengthen our community and its cultural opportunities.

Even though we give to the environment and improve it somewhat, we must recognize that not all aspects of environment can be changed. You cannot change your heredity or the age and stage of your family in its life cycle.

Managing our lives with the restrictions and opportunities received from environment may be thought of this way:

Worthwhile folks don't just happen. You aren't born worthwhile. You are born with the possibilities of becoming worthwhile. Your job is to discover and develop the man or woman you ought to be.

—Robert Louis Stevenson

Adapted from *Environment*, Home Management Newsletter. Iowa State University, Ames, Iowa. January, 1967.